



Because Justice is for All

## **Request for Proposal for Pro Bono Innovation Fund (PBIF) Transformation Consultant**

### **Purpose of Proposal:**

Request for Proposal for internal and external assessment of Neighborhood Legal Services Pro Bono Program. Neighborhood Legal Services has begun building a pro bono program focused on pilot projects, and now seeks to expand program elements agency wide.

### **Introduction:**

Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), founded in 1966, is a non-profit civil legal aid organization serving Allegheny, Beaver, Butler and Lawrence Counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania. NLS operates one office in each county of our four-county service area. Approximately 200,000 Pennsylvanians are eligible for our services. Our [mission](#) is to meet the civil legal needs of low-income and vulnerable individuals in our community through effective legal representation and education.

NLS's vision for pro bono, consistent with its new strategic plan, is a uniform, sustainable, coordinated, and integrated Pro Bono Unit infrastructure with regular pro bono activities and a consistent presence including recruitment, CLE training, and recognition throughout our four-county service area. This vision is rooted in the [strategic plan](#) and informed by the lessons learned from the LSC PBIF-2021 Non-Direct Services grant (PBIF-2021 grant) implementation experience.

We currently have nine pro bono projects in the following areas: Bankruptcy, Clean Slate and Expungement, Custody, Guardianship, Landlord Tenant Advice and Eviction Diversion, Protection from Abuse, Tangled Title/Heirs Property, and Unemployment Compensation. These projects operate with varying degrees of uniformity, quality controls, and volunteer engagement.

### **Assessment Background:**

NLS's pro bono projects have not historically been strategically coordinated or particularly well supported. Pro bono is inconsistently integrated into substantive law practices, and is lacking in Beaver, Butler and Lawrence Counties (our three suburban and rural counties).

In 2021, NLS created a position for and hired a Pro Bono Manager to begin reviewing current pro bono practices and opportunities, and run a pilot project related to eviction prevention with a new Pro Bono Coordinator. The overarching goal of this work was to develop the agency's capacity to strategically coordinate pro bono initiatives and increase volunteerism. The Pro Bono Manager and Pro Bono Coordinator, with senior leadership and the internal NLS Pro Bono Coordination Working Group, will work directly with the consultant. Building on good practices and opportunities for improvements identified in the first 2.5 years of dedicated pro bono work within NLS, we are eager to make agency-wide improvements to our pro bono projects and infrastructure.

It is important to note that pro bono is slowly rebounding after COVID-19 shutdowns as the two new pro bono dedicated staff work to implement programmatic structure, increase consistency, and integrate improvements in agency pro bono work.

### **Scope of Work:**

The consultant for this project will lead NLS in a collaborative assessment to transform NLS's emerging Pro Bono Unit into a uniform, sustainable, coordinated, and integrated Pro Bono Unit so that we can support pro bono attorneys to leverage strategic legal services and provide high-quality assistance to eligible NLS clients throughout our four-county service area.

NLS has identified specific next steps in developing its pro bono program: developing a strategic plan for the Pro Bono Unit, creating a tactical operating plan for extending the existing Clean Slate and Expungement pro bono project to our three rural counties, and drafting an *NLS Internal Operations Pro Bono Handbook*. With these specific deliverables in mind, we intend for the consultant's work to empower NLS to transform our new pro bono unit from pilot projects to thoughtfully leveraged, agency-wide strategic success.

The consultant will provide the following services:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of our pro bono projects to determine how we can better integrate pro bono into all our substantive law units in each of our four counties;
- Conduct an external assessment that involves current pro bono volunteers, members of the Bar within and outside of our service area, paralegals, law students, and clients to better understand barriers to pro bono and how to overcome them and to identify projects that center clients and meet volunteer needs;
- Conduct an external assessment, including surveying similar legal aid organizations, to determine the best way to recruit and retain a variety of volunteers who may provide services in person and remotely, including by phone;
- Conduct an internal assessment of NLS's current pro bono staff and structure for our current and expected pro bono projects and programming, including staffing capacity and recommendations to ensure that NLS provides the support volunteers need to perform effective, high-quality, client-centered work;
- Provide recommendations for sustainable pro bono staffing, including roles and responsibilities;
- Work closely in conducting the assessment with the Pro Bono Manager, Executive Director, Pro Bono Coordinator, and relevant NLS leadership and staff to ensure buy-in for the final assessment and recommendations;
- Identify and recommend technology improvements needed for internal and external pro bono efficiency and effectiveness;
- Provide preliminary findings and recommendations based on the assessment, providing NLS with the opportunity to review and discuss the final recommendations;
- Provide a comprehensive assessment report for implementation to NLS;
- Work with NLS's Pro Bono Manager, Development Director, and Executive Director to develop a communication plan for the assessment's implementation.

- Include recommendations and resources to support NLS pro bono staff and senior leadership in developing these follow-up deliverables:
  - A strategic plan for the Pro Bono Unit.
  - A strategic/tactical operating plan for extending the existing pro bono Clean Slate and Expungement project to our three rural counties.
  - *An NLS Internal Operations Pro Bono Handbook.*

**Deliverables:**

1. Written preliminary and final reports that summarize assessment method, processes, findings, and recommendations.

**Timeline:**

NLS anticipates that the assessment will occur between October 1, 2024 and February 2025. A final report is due to NLS by March 21, 2025.<sup>i</sup>

- RFP published in August 2024.
- Proposals due by September 13, 2024, but will be reviewed on a rolling basis.
- Interviews conducted in September 2024.
- Consultant selected by end of September 2024.
- Week of October 1, 2024, the consultant meets with the NLS pro bono team and begins assessment.
- Preliminary written assessment and recommendations, and other deliverables, are provided to NLS's pro bono Team by February 21, 2025.
- Final report delivered by March 21, 2025.

**Submission guidelines:**

Proposals should include:

- Consultant qualifications, including a comprehensive resume or curriculum vitae.
- Three professional references from organizations for which similar services have been provided.
- Total costs for providing services including a proposed budget with all anticipated expenses. Costs may not exceed \$25,000.
- Two relevant sample reports or case studies of completed assessments with recommendations.
- A description of your approach to conducting the assessment and generating the recommendations as described in the Scope of Work, including but not limited to:
  - How you will help NLS clarify its pro bono vision;
  - How you will engage pro bono staff and NLS staff generally in the process;
  - How you will engage outside stakeholders, including clients and volunteers;
  - How you will capture and utilize data to support the assessment recommendations.



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- **Submission deadline:** All proposals must be submitted to [probono@nlsa.us](mailto:probono@nlsa.us) with “Pro Bono Assessment” in the subject line. Proposals are due by September 13, 2024, but will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

**Contact information:** For inquiries or additional information, please contact Judy Hale, Pro Bono Manager, at [halej@nlsa.us](mailto:halej@nlsa.us).

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<sup>i</sup> NLS reserves the right to modify timeline.